INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
IS VIEWED BY Joan Iglehart DATE 10/5/81
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PARAGRAPH EXEMPTIONS

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REF: A. STATE'S 37993
B. SAIGON 4940

1. IN VIEW OF PRESS COMMENT ON SAIGON ELECTION CAMPAIGN NOTED IN REF A, IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT LARGE RALLIES TO LISTEN TO CANDIDATES DISCUSS ISSUES ARE NOT NORMAL VIETNAMESE POLITICAL PRACTICE. INITIAL OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN SAIGON-CHOLON MEETINGS OBSERVED BY EMBOFFS HAVE BEEN POORLY ATTENDED (200-300 ONLOOKERS) BUT CONSIDERABLE INFORMAL POLITICAL ACTIVITY APPEARS TO BE UNDERWAY. VIETNAMESE EQUIVALENT

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OF US "WARDHEELERS" ARE PASSING OUT CAMPAIGN PAMPHLETS DOR-TO-DOOR AND ONE LIST CHOLON CANDIDATES HAS BEEN SEEN CANVASSING PRIVATE SCHOOLS, PAGODAS AND LARGER BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS.

2. FIRST INDICATIONS FROM PROVINCES ARE THAT CAMPAIGNING WILL FOLLOW SIMILAR PATTERN--SMALL TURNOUTS FOR RALLIES AND ACTIVE SUB-SURFACE POLITICKING. SOME CANDIDATES HAVE APPARENTLY ALREADY EXPENDED CONSIDERABLE SUMS ON PRE-ELECTION ACTIVITY, PROBABLY MAINLY FOR PRECINCT-WORKER WAGES. FOR EXAMPLE, "RISING SUN" LIST LED BY DR. PHAN QUANG DAN IN GIA DINH'S SECOND ELECTORAL DISTRICT REPORTEDLY HAS MORE THAN 1,000 ELECTION CADRE DOING DOOR-TO-DOOR PROSELYTIZING. COORDINATED BY DISTRICT AND VILLAGE CAMPAIGN CHIEFS. THIS EXTENSIVE ACTIVITY BEING FUNDED OUT OF CAMPAIGN WAR-

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CHEST CONTRIBUTED BY THREE LEADING MEMBERS OF LIST. CAMPAIGN APPARATUS NOT INTENDED TO PRODUCE MASS RALLIES, RATHER IT IS DESIGNED TO CONTACT PERSONALLY LARGEST POSSIBLE NUMBER OF PEOPLE ON BEHALF OF "RISING SUN". SIMILAR, THOUGH LESS ELABORATE PROCESS GOING ON

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IN OTHER PROVINCES, WHERE WORD-OF-MOUTH INFORMATION CONSIDERED MORE CREDIBLE THAN MEETINGS BEARING OFFICIAL STAMP.

3. IN MANY PROVINCES, CAMPAIGN MACHINES SIMILAR TO THAT OF DR. DAN IN GIA DINH ARE PROVIDED BY EXISTING POLITICAL/RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS, WHETHER THEY BE CATHOLIC, CAO DAI, HOA HAO, VNQDD OR DAI VIET. (ACTION ARM OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS IN SOME CASES LOCAL RD CADRE.) THESE ACTIVITIES, LIKE THOSE OF DR. DAN'S ORGANIZATION, FOCUSED ON PERSONAL CONTACT WITH VOTERS. MANY MILITARY CANDIDATES PRESUMABLY HAVE SUPPORT OF PROVINCIAL AND MILITARY APPARATUS. IN SOME PROVINCES WE HAVE REPORTS OF BUDDHIST INSTITUTE ORGANIZATION COVERTLY CAMPAIGNING FOR CANDIDATES WHICH IT FINDS ACCEPTABLE. AS NOTED IN EMBTEL 4940, AUGUST 31, REVOLUTIONARY DAI VIET LEADER HA THUC KY WAS UNWILLING NAME HIS PARTY'S CANDIDATES OR EVEN SPECIFY HOW MANY THER ARE. PRESUMABLY, DAI VIET HOPEFULS WILL NOT BE CAMPAIGNING ON PARTY PLATFORM BUT WILL RELY ON EFFECTIVE MISSIONARY WORK BY PARTY ORGANIZATION.

4. OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN FOR MAY 30, 1965 PROVINCE COUNCIL

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ELECTIONS WAS ON SURFACE EQUALLY UNSPECTACULAR AFFAIR YET ENDED IN GOOD TURNOUT OF REGISTERED VOTERS WHO APPEARED REASONABLY WELL-INFORMED BY VIETNAMESE STANDARDS ON CANDIDATES' IDENTITIES AND ISSUES INVOLVED. PRESENT PRE-ELECTION ACTIVITIES ALREADY SEEM TO HAVE MADE POPULACE IN PROVINCE AND DISTRICT TOWNS AWARE OF WHO CANDIDATES ARE AND GENERAL PURPOSE OF ELECTION PORCESS. HOWEVER, WE

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DOUBT THAT TYPE OF CAMPAIGNING DESCRIBED ABOVE, WHICH WAS TYPICAL OF PAST ELECTIONS AND LACKS DRAMATIC APPEAL, IS LIKELY TO SATISFY OR BE USEFUL TO U.S. MASS MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES NOW IN COUNTRY. MANY OF THOSE JOURNALISTS WITH LONGER VIETNAMESE EXPERIENCE APPEAR, HOWEVER, TO BE PREVIDING OBJECTIVE COVERAGE. GP-4 LODGE.
BT

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